

Biology and Ecological Niches in the Gulf of the Farallones



Year round, thousands of people are attracted to the cold waters of the Gulf of the Farallones for its whale and bird watching, beautiful coastal tide pools, and commercial and sport fishing. Few realize that the organisms that they see and catch are only a small part of a rich and complex marine ecosystem.

Scientists have found that the distribution and abundance of marine flora and fauna in the gulf are directly related to the physical and chemical conditions of its waters. Upwelling of deep nutrient-rich waters along the coast during the spring and summer months of most years feeds microscopic plankton that support a complex but fragile web of organisms, from Dungeness crabs, chinook salmon, and brown pelicans to elephant seals, great white sharks, and giant blue whales. The Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries help to protect and preserve this marine abundance.